



DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

165 Capitol Avenue
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Senate Bill 322
An Act Concerning the Qualifications of
Department of Children and Families Employees

Select Committee on Children
February 22, 2011

The Department of Administrative Services, as the agency responsible for Statewide Human Resources Management, including the establishment of job classifications and the minimum experience, knowledge and training requirements for classified state jobs, offers the following concerns about Senate Bill 322, *An Act Concerning the Qualifications of Department of Children and Families Employees*, for the Committee's consideration. SB 322 imposes strict new educational and licensure requirements on the social workers and social work supervisors at the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Specifically, SB 322 creates the following requirements:

- On or after January 1, 2012, all applicants for the DCF social worker or social work supervisor positions shall have a master's degree in social work or a closely related field.
- On or after January 1, 2017, all DCF employees in the social worker or social work supervisor positions shall have a master's degree in social work or a closely related field.
- On or after January 1, 2020, all DCF employees in the social worker or social work supervisor positions shall be licensed as a master or clinical social worker.

DAS believes the unintended consequences that are likely to result from each of these requirements will undermine the goals of this legislation and have a detrimental effect on DCF's functionality.

Requiring all new applicants to have a master's degree in social work or closely related field:

- This requirement will limit the pool of potential applicants.
 - According to the Council on Social Work Education, there are only 208 accredited master's social work programs in the United States, only two of which are in Connecticut.
- This requirement may expose the state to civil liability if it creates a disparate impact against protected groups.

- State and federal courts, as well as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, impose a heavy burden on employers to justify the job relatedness and business necessity of job selection criteria, including educational minimums and licensure requirements.
- DAS is not aware of any objective data justifying the business necessity of making a master's degree a minimum qualification for these positions.
- To the contrary, the fact that 2/3 of the current incumbents in the social worker titles at DCF (excluding licensed clinical social worker) do not have master's degrees supports the conclusion that there is not a business need to make possession of a master's degree a minimum qualification.

Requiring all DCF social workers and social work supervisors to have master's degrees in social work or a closely related field:

- The concerns listed above apply equally to this requirement.
- In addition, DAS questions whether it is possible for the several hundred current social workers and supervisors who have only bachelor's degrees to complete master's degree programs by 2017, given the limited number of such programs available, and the number of hours required to complete the courses and field work required to obtain a master's degree.
 - DAS also questions whether this bill contemplates that the state would have to pay for this additional education.
- Requiring all incumbents in the DCF social worker and social work supervisor positions to have master's degrees is likely to give rise to a claim for a salary upgrade for these titles.

Requiring all DCF social worker and social worker supervisors to be licensed as a master or clinical social worker:

- All of the concerns listed above apply equally to this requirement.
 - Indeed, given that licensure is not legally required to perform non-clinical social work, the concerns about lack of business necessity and disparate impact are even greater.
- In addition, DCF employees in the social worker and social work supervisor positions do not perform clinical social work.
 - Any clinical social work needed at DCF is performed by individuals in the Licensed Clinical Social Work specification. (Compare Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor job specifications with Clinical Social Worker job specification, attached.)
- Because these employees do not perform clinical social work, the hours they work for the State will not count toward the number of hours of clinical social work required to obtain a license as a clinical social worker.

- Similarly, the work the DCF employees perform will not provide them with the experience they need to have a reasonable chance to pass the master social work license exam or the clinical social work license exam.
- As a result, DAS is concerned that the current workers will be forced to moonlight or leave state service to obtain the necessary clinical hours and experience.

Thank you for considering DAS's concerns regarding this bill. DAS would be happy to meet with the proponents of this proposal to discuss the concerns this proposal is intended to address and develop alternative strategies.

